

OVERALL VISITOR USE AND EXPERIENCE

903 comments. These comments were essentially unanimous in their position that seeing buffalo is a major reason for traveling to Yellowstone National Park. Over 80 percent of the comments contained phrases such as “highlight of the trip,” “greatest memories,” “great to see bison roaming free,” “a valuable resource,” “part of the joy,” “were thrilled to see,” “love and admire these animals,” “most memorable,” “buffalo are the soul of the park,” “love to see these free roaming beasts,” “greatest joys is to observe them,” “we want our grandchildren and great-grandchildren to see them,” “impressive,” “the buffalo contribute to the magnificence of the park,” “unqualified inspiration,” “most exciting things,” “not merely a thrill...,” “the high point of the trip,” “photographs that make students ‘ooh and ahhh’.” Comments from foreign visitors were equally enthusiastic, especially since bison do not occur in their country. Three comments supported the prohibition of snowmobiles (except - in one case - for park personnel) and road grooming in the park. One comment requested protection for outfitters. Note: the prohibition of over-snow vehicles was considered but rejected. Other comments noted that motorized transport is necessary to view the animals in both summer and in winter. A few comments indicated that disgust with the killing of bison would prevent the writer from visiting Montana again.

Comment 1

“People come from around the world to see these wild animals, and bring their valuable tourist dollars with them. These animals’ inherent value lies in the fact that they are the only real, wild population of bison in the world.” - Individual, Germantown, MD, YELL-10557.

Comment 2

“I have been to Yellowstone National Park on numerous occasions and recognize the value of the bison to the park, its biological integrity and its genetic potential to establish buffalo herds in other areas.” - Individual, Boise, ID, YELL-10339.

Comment 3

“Bison have an almost mythic symbolism in the folklore of the American west, and the millions of tourists who travel to the park each year do so in part to see these animals in their natural state.” - Individual, Bothwell, WA, YELL-10450.

Comment 4

“Finally I want to go on record that my family and I have canceled our planned 1999 vacation to Montana’s Glacier National Park because of this ongoing conflict. We are awaiting a positive resolution before we consider spending our tourist dollars in Montana. - Individual, Roseland, FL, YELL-10318.

WINTER ROAD GROOMING

2,124 total comments; 507 (24%) in support, 1,183 (64%) in opposition. The main issue of concern is that bison move along groomed roads to exit the park. Controversy exists on whether bison would continue to exit the park if roads were not groomed. Roads are groomed for local traffic and tourist snowmobiles and coaches. The majority of comments were in favor of closing the roads to snowmobiles and stopping grooming of the roads. The remainder were opposed to reducing or eliminating snowmobiles within the park.

Comment 1

“I suggest not allowing the use of snowmobiles in the park, as well as prohibiting cattle grazing in public lands outside of the park, and insisting that cattle be vaccinated on private land.” - Individual, Taylorville, IL, YELL-1035.

Comment 2

“I do not believe it is necessary to close groomed roads within the Park under the guise of sound Bison management. The park was set aside of the enjoyment of people and closing a portion of the main travel route would do irreparable damage to the winter wonderland experience of many people.” - Individual, Cody, WY, YELL-10072.

Comment 3

“The Bison Alternative, which I favor strongly in regard to the Yellowstone Bison. 1. Immediately close Yellowstone National Park to snowmobile use, and prohibit trail grooming. 2...” - Individual, Carnegie, PA, YELL-10546.

Comment 4

“The park must remain open to snowmobiles and with good management there is no reason why a well balanced plan could not be found. The park was set up for the enjoyment of the people and funded with people’s money, and not to be controlled by a few for a few. Please take the users into consideration and adopt Alternative seven because it establishes a carrying capacity within the park for bison, manages the bison population accordingly, and does not effect [sic] winter recreation and snowmobiling with road closures and road plowing.” - Individual, Anderson, CA, YELL-10287.

Comment 5

“...This issue was thoroughly discussed in the comments we submitted December 15, 1997, on behalf [of] the defendant-intervenors on the Temporary Closure of a Winter Road EA (‘Road Closure EA Comments’)...The Bison DEIS fails to adequately address the devastating effect elimination of over-snow use of snowmobiles and snow coaches will have on Park visitors,

concessionaires, gateway communities, recreation intyerests, American with Disabilities Act interests, and wildlife... The Bison DEIS also fails to consider grooming additional roads in the park that may provide the bison with other Park access thus limiting their need to migrate outside of the Park for forage in the winter. Such an alternative is definitely within a reasonable range of alternatives as it appears that the Park Service desires to keep the bison within the Park boundaries.” - Business, Moore, McFadden, Chartered, YELL-14978.

Comment 6

“The use of snowmobiles in Yellowstone must be prohibited since this no-cost and humane alternative would most likely prevent buffalo from using these energy efficient trails to leave the park in the winter, thereby eliminating any justification to kill them. There are plenty of other places for people to enjoy their snowmobiles.” - Individual, Seattle, WA, YELL-1226.

Comment 7

“It would be very unfortunate, not only for us, but for thousands of others that have not had the opportunity to experience the beauty of riding throughout Yellowstone. Alternatives 2,3,4, and 6 would eliminate snowmobiling.” - Individual, Churches Ferry, ND, YELL-15424.